

April 2013

Crumbs

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Recommended Citation

Giordano, Joseph (2013) "Crumbs," *The Anthology*: Vol. 2013, Article 27.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/anthology/vol2013/iss1/27>

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Joseph Giordano | Prose Editor

Joseph Giordano is a senior English major and Creative Writing minor. A New York native, Joseph loves survival horror video games, Raymond Carver's short fiction, *Breaking Bad*, Internet memes, and Tilda Swinton. He may or may not have cosplayed as Peeta Mellark for Halloween in 2012.

► *Crumbs*

"Hey, fat-fuck."

I pretend not to hear. I refuse to wince or flinch. My eyes bore into the book before me, but I cannot read any words. The letters are interchangeable. When my eyes attempt to connect a string of words, the thread unravels, and a tangled mess appears on the page.

I'm sitting on bleachers in a gymnasium. The sound of sneakers squeaking on the polyurethane floor — smooth and reflective — bounce and echo. My adolescent fingers, plump as sausage links and slick with sweat, grip the paperback as footsteps approach.

"Fatty, it's your turn," the same male voice on the precarious cusp of puberty declares. He has a speech impediment; "your turn," is pronounced "yee-oooh tu-uhn." I'm silent and immobile. Suddenly, Kent, the bespectacled tall boy with a mop of black hair that seems like a decrepit dead crow, snatches my book.

"Whatchu readin', DiGiorno?" That's his prescribed nickname for me after the frozen pizza brand. Hilarious.

I sullenly look up at Kent and his two short minions. All 250 pounds of me sulk there, wearing a sweater to cover the folds of fat of my physique. My cheekbones are buried beneath a flabby film of fat.

"To Kewl A Mockingbud." A scoff trails behind his voice. He tosses the novel aside. "Coach says it's yuh tu-uhn," Kent says and swaggers away, a grin plastered on his face. During basketball practice, the jelly slouching off my biceps jiggle like water balloons I once threw as a slim child.

After I arrive home from school late in the afternoon, I devour a pizza, a cup of ramen noodles, and a plate of chicken nuggets. I wash it all down with whole-fat chocolate milk. Afterwards, I go up to my bedroom with a box of cookies.

I lock my door.

Outside my window, the autumn evening sun pours across a thicket of dead trees. Skinny and skeletal branches wave and whisper hateful words. I plant my overweight self before a television and watch the only DVD I own of my favorite show. I'm content with watching the same four episodes repeatedly. I shovel the cookies into my mouth. When the disk finishes, the box is empty, and I am finally full. A small pile of crumbs has formed on my lap.